

THE FRANKLIN CAMP MONTHLY BULLETIN

OFFICIAL DISPATCH FOR THE FRANKLIN CAMP #5
DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS
SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

VOLUME 6, No. 4

APRIL 13, 2026

A DINNER CONVERSATION: FUNERAL HOMES AND MORTUARY SCIENCE



The March meeting of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Franklin Camp had quite a packed agenda. With twenty in attendance for the evening, Commander Jim Thornton began the meeting at 6:00pm and opened with a reminder of the Department Encampment and confirmed the camp delegates attending. He then went into detail about the Department of Kansas plan for an “America 250” event involving a wreath laying at the grave of Sarah Ruddell Davis, a recognized Revolutionary War Patriot, interred at the Shawnee Methodist Mission Cemetery in Fairway. The event will take place on Memorial Day.

Commander Thornton continued with a list of upcoming events, including the camp’s traditional Memorial Day Ceremony and presentation of Quilts-of-Valor. The full list of upcoming events can be found in a separate article below.

Now came the evening’s presentation. Normally, mortician science would not be a proper dinner conversation. But since the group is centered around Civil War history, this was a perfectly fine subject – especially since the science drastically evolved during the years of the war.



The speaker for the program was Mr. Jeff Harrington from the Alden-Harrington Funeral Home in Bonner Springs. Mr. Harrington gave a detailed explanation on how before the war, a burial was mostly a family affair as time was critical due to the lack of preservation practices. During the war, death occurred far from home, but families desired the body to be returned for burial at home which took days. Thus, the rapid progression of mortuary science and embalming techniques.

Even terminology we take for granted today developed during the Civil War time period. Why is it called a “Funeral Parlor?” Well, as Jeff explained, that is because the family funeral took place in the “parlor” of the home. What about the term “undertaker?” Mr. Harrington explained that word comes from the duties of the embalmers “who undertook the job of preparing the body and returning the remains to the family.” Since they “undertook” the job, they became known as “undertakers.”

So, it wasn’t a gruesome dinner conversation after all. It was quite an education about an often underappreciated profession. And, we also learned the origin of some of the terminology associated with it.



History of Funeral Directing & Embalming

Pre & Post Civil War
Alden Harrington Funeral Home

A NEW CAMP COMMANDER **TAKES THE GAVEL**



With his election as the new Commander of the Department of Kansas at the 30th Department Encampment, held March 28, Camp Commander Jim Thornton would need to relinquish his command of the Franklin Camp in accordance with National Rules and Regulations. To accomplish this, and with the approval of the camp membership, Brother Thornton (right) and Brother Dan Stilley (left) swapped camp officer positions. At the conclusion of the March 26 camp meeting, Jim handed over command of the camp to Dan and assumed the office of camp secretary.

Commander Dan Stilley becomes the eighth commander of the Franklin Camp.

Franklin Camp

Calendar of Upcoming Events

APRIL 25: Park Day at Mine Creek Battlefield

Where: Mine Creek Battlefield State Historic Site, Pleasanton, KS

Time: 9:00am until???

What: Volunteers will be helping with landscaping, cleaning, painting, etc.

MAY 1: Missouri Schools History Day at Lone Jack Battlefield

Where: Lone Jack Battlefield; 301 S Bynum Rd, Lone Jack, MO 64070

Time: 9:00am to 1:30pm

What: Provide Civil War education to middle-school students touring stations on Missouri history set up around the battlefield. This is a partner event with the SCV Key Camp.

MAY 23: Annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Quilt-of-Valor Presentations

Where: Olathe Memorial Cemetery; 730 N Chestnut St, Olathe, KS 66061
At the GAR Memorial and Civil War Circle

Time: 10:00am

MAY 25: “America 250” – Ceremony and Wreath Laying on Grave of Sarah Ruddell Davis

Where: Shawnee Methodist Mission Cemetery; 5341 Canterbury Rd, Fairway, KS
(on Shawnee Mission Parkway, just east of Old Mission United Methodist Church)

When: 10:00am

What: Sarah Ruddell Davis is a recognized Revolutionary War Patriot by both the SAR and DAR. She is buried here. The Department of Kansas, as part of the America 250 Celebration will perform a wreath laying and ceremony.

JUNE 6: Old Shawnee Days Parade

Where: Downtown Shawnee; along Nieman Road and along Johnson Drive

When: 10:00am, Saturday, June 6

What: SUCVW Franklin Camp has entered the parade; Brother Jim Thornton will be driving his convertible sports car with SUCVW signage; camp brothers are encouraged to walk along.

JULY 30: SUCVW National Encampment

Where: Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Aspire Hotel and Suites

When: July 30 to August 2

Details: Visit <https://sucv.org/encampment-hotel>

Franklin Camp Receives Honors At Department Encampment

During the presentation of awards portion of the SUVCW Department of Kansas Encampment on March 28, Franklin Camp heard its name called multiple times.

The first time occurred during the recognition of camps who met the 2025-2026 PDC Robert D. Boyd II Membership Challenge. This award recognized camps who recruited at least three new members over the course of the year. Three camps met the challenge: Old Abe Camp 16, Sergeant Samuel J. Churchill Camp 4, and Franklin Camp 5.



Then it was time for the William W. Nixon Award for Camp of the Year. Franklin Camp heard their name called for this award. Accepting the Camp of the Year Award from Department Commander Kent Melcher was Franklin Camp Commander Daniel Stilley.

The next award was the Captain Patrick H. Coney Award for Brother of the Year. This award was presented to Franklin Camp Brother Jerry Coffelt in recognition for his dedication and service

to his fellow Franklin Camp Brothers and participation in camp activities.

There was one additional award presented to a Franklin Camp Brother. But we are going to keep that a secret for right now. This recipient was not present at the encampment, so Commander Stilley accepted the award on his behalf. The camp plans to present this award to the recipient at our meeting on April 23.



Besides the awards, Past Camp Commander Jim Thornton was elected 2025-26 Commander for the Department of Kansas and Brother Bryan Wampler was elected a Department Council Member for a two-year term. Also, several Franklin Camp Brothers received appointments for Department Officer positions.

It was a historic day for Franklin Camp 5. It demonstrated that the camp's efforts do not go unrecognized by our fellow brothers.

<<<The Franklin Camp contingent (L-R): Jerry Coffelt, Bryan Wampler, Jim Thornton, Jeffrey Winters, Dan Stilley, Lee Wilson, Bill Stilley, Bill Stoker. Not pictured: Dale Walters.

Department of Kansas Officers for 2026-2027



*[L. to R. – Front row – PDC Alan L. Russ, PDC Thomas E. Schmidt, PCC James D. Thornton, PDC Roy A. Lafferty, PDC Rocky L. Bartlow
Back Row – Stanley E. Palmer, PDC Kent M. Melcher, Eric L. Crittenden, Brent D. Whitten, Jeffrey A. Winters, Bryan W. Wampler, Christopher R. Cardone, Jonathan A. Holder, Boone O. Dodson, PCinC Brian C. Pierson (National Representative)]*



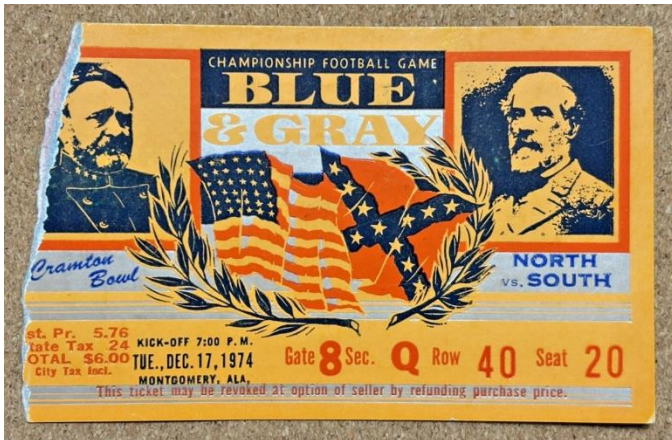
DID YOU KNOW?

THERE WAS A COLLEGE FOOTBALL BOWL GAME

BASED ON THE CIVIL WAR?

How many of you watch college football bowl games? I'm sure you are aware several of them at the end of the season are All-Star games – The Senior Bowl, The East-West Shrine Bowl, The Hula Bowl, etc. But how many of you remember The Blue-Gray All-Star Classic Bowl Game? This one was discontinued in 2004.

The Blue-Gray All-Star Football Classic was a college football game featuring senior players from across the country held annually in Montgomery, Alabama, from 1938 through 2004. Montgomery's Cramton Bowl Stadium hosted all but the last, played at Troy University's Movie Gallery Stadium in 2004.



The Blue-Gray Classic was the brainchild of Alabama sports promoter William "Champ" Pickens. Drawing on his experience managing a western tour for Howard "Red" Grange's All-Stars in the 1920s, Pickens suggested the concept for the game to the promoters of the 1939 New York World's Fair. He envisioned the contest as an intersectional all-star contest with players from schools on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line representing the "North" and the "South." The "Gray" teams composed of coaches and players from schools in the South faced "Blue" teams composed of those from northern states as well as those from the rest of the country. Before the New

York World's Fair organizers could accept, however, Montgomery, Alabama mayor William A. Gunter convinced Pickens to hold the game in the city's Cramton Bowl.

From the beginning, Civil War regalia and symbolism dominated the Blue-Gray game. The game programs described the coaches as "generals" and the players as "soldiers" and the tickets sometimes featured the images of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, leading generals of the Union and Confederacy, respectively. Pickens felt the association would heighten interest in the contest as well as foster goodwill between the two regions.

Owing to its location in the Deep South, the game was slow to desegregate. In 1963, NBC cancelled the telecast of the contest in response to the Blue-Gray Game's Montgomery-based organizers refusing to invite African American players. The game finally desegregated in 1965, which in turn convinced CBS to acquire the broadcasting rights. However, civil rights leaders complained that forcing African American players from southern colleges and universities to represent the former Confederacy was both insensitive and offensive. Also in the late 1960s, because of growing public dissension over the Vietnam War, peace activists decried the contest as glorifying war and militarism.

For many years, the Blue-Gray was the first post-season bowl game, which bolstered its viewership significantly. Organizers scheduled the game for a date during the last week of December until 1978, when it was permanently slotted on Christmas Day. As more bowls were introduced at earlier dates in the 1990s and 2000s, however, the popularity of the game dwindled significantly. The game was not played in 2003 after longtime sponsor Kelly Springfield Tire (a subsidiary of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company), under pressure by civil rights leaders who threatened a boycott, decided to discontinue its sponsorship, The Blue-Gray All-Star Football Classic was discontinued following a single contest played at Troy University's Movie Gallery Stadium in 2004.

And now you know. The Blue and The Gray also did battle on the football field.

The First Shot of the Civil War

When Was It Fired?

Who Should Get Credit?



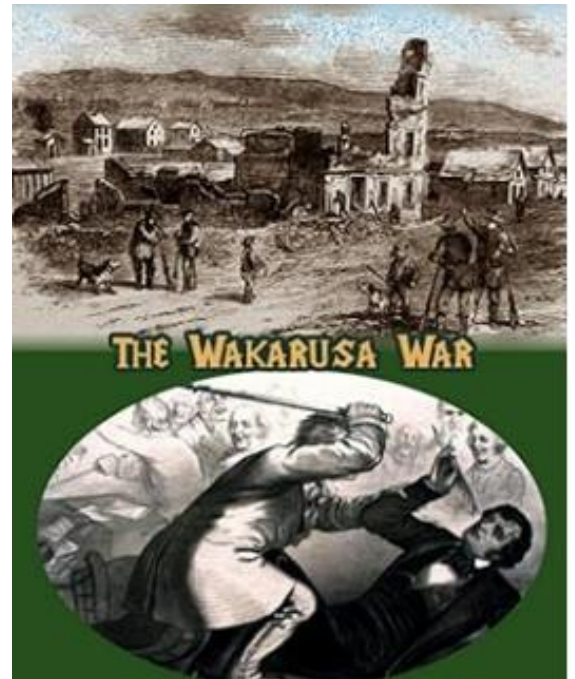
April 12, 1861, is almost universally accepted as the date the first shot of the American Civil War was fired. At 4:30 a.m., 67-year-old Virginia secessionist Edmund Ruffin fired a shell from a 64-pounder Columbiad cannon on Morris Island, marking one of the first shots of the Civil War. Ruffin is widely credited as firing the first shot to hit Fort Sumter. While a signal mortar shot officially initiated the bombardment at 4:30 a.m. by Captain George S. James and Lieutenant Henry S. Farley, Ruffin is widely acknowledged as having fired the first shot that aimed directly at and hit the Union fortress.

This is what we are taught in school. This is what has been accepted in history for 165 years.

Option number two is along the border of Kansas and Missouri. Some historians point to November 21, 1855, as the beginning date of the Civil War when a pro-slavery settler named Franklin Coleman shot and killed a Free-Stater named Charles Dow. This was the Wakarusa War and the outbreak of the time period known as Bleeding Kansas.

The Wakarusa War was an armed standoff that took place in the Kansas Territory during November and December 1855. It is often cited by historians as the first instance of violence during the conflict between anti-slavery and pro-slavery factions in the region along the border between Kansas Territory and the State of Missouri.

The incident took place in Douglas County, centered on the Wakarusa River Valley and the town of Lawrence, where the opposing militias confronted each other for the first time. At the behest of Territorial Governor Wilson Shannon, the two sides eventually agreed to a truce, but it was short-lived, and widespread violence resumed the following spring. Within five years, this violence would spread nationwide.



Was November 21, 1855, and the Wakarusa War incident the true beginning and first shots of the Civil War? Should Franklin Coleman receive credit as firing the first shot? Numerous historians and academics believe so.

Then there is a third option for the first shots of the Civil War. This is a relatively new theory that seems to be gaining a lot more support over the last few years. This proposal for the first shots involves a military school, a lame-duck president, and a supply ship. Like the accepted history, it also involves Fort Sumter.

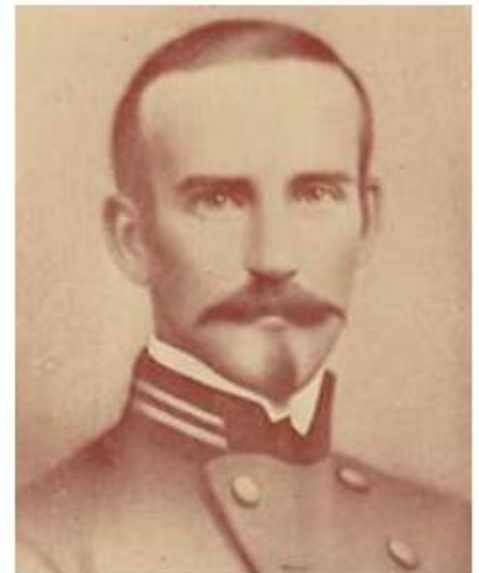


In January 1861, Fort Sumter was desperate. Major Robert Anderson had concentrated his forces within the walls of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. But he was receiving no support from the Federal government. James Buchanan was a lame-duck president simply trying to avoid taking any action and wishing to leave the secession mess for the incoming Abraham Lincoln to deal with.

Finally, Buchanan attempted an unarmed resupply mission to Fort Sumter. He dispatched the steamer *Star of the West* to Charleston loaded with supplies, but no

munitions. On January 9, 1861, the *Star of the West* arrived in Charleston Harbor. Cadets from The Citadel Military Academy, station on Morris Island, opened fire on the steamship, forcing it to turn back.

Early on the morning of January 9, Citadel cadet William Simkins, who was on duty as a sentinel on Morris Island, saw the *Star of the West* enter Charleston harbor. He alerted his comrades, who quickly went to their guns. As the Federal vessel continued to steam toward Fort Sumter, the commander of the cadets, Citadel superintendent Major P.F. Stevens, ordered a shot to be fired across the bow of the oncoming ship. This shot was fired by Citadel cadet George Edward Haynsworth.



George Haynsworth

The *Star of the West* continued toward Fort Sumter. More shots were fired from Morris Island, and still more from Fort Moultrie. These shots flew close by the *Star of the West*, and a few even struck the ship. Although the damage to the merchant ship was slight, she was unarmed and, hence, unable to defend herself. When Captain John McGowan of the *Star of the West* saw ships approaching from Charleston, he gave the order for his ship to reverse course, and the vessel steamed out of Charleston harbor as the batteries on shore continued to fire until the ship moved out of range.

The cannon fire that drove off the *Star of the West* began with the shot fired by George Haynsworth, which was the first hostile shot fired between a seceded state and the United States, and which preceded the shots on Fort Sumter by more than three months. It can be argued, however, that The *Star of the West* was originally a civilian merchant steamship, not a designed military vessel, which was chartered by the U.S. government in January 1861 to deliver supplies to Fort Sumter.

So, when was the first shot fired that started the Civil War? And by who? Technically, the Wakarusa War is the weakest of the three as there had been no secession of a state at that point. This leaves two possibilities: January 9, 1861, and April 12, 1861. Secession had occurred and the Federal Government had been warned not to try resupplying or reinforcing Fort Sumter. Who gets the credit for firing the first shot to strike a Union target? Is it George Haynsworth on January 9? Or is it Edmund Ruffin on April 12?

For this writer, the evidence clearly shows that the cadets from The Citadel fired the first shots of the American Civil War. Although damage was slight and superficial, shots from the Citadel cadets on Morris Island did strike a Union chartered vessel clearly indicating an act of war. George Haynsworth should be credited with the first shot.

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The Franklin Camp Monthly Bulletin is a newsletter published for the Franklin Camp #5 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The SUV is a non-profit organization with a patriotic, historical, and genealogical orientation and is not affiliated with any other organization. Opinions in this newsletter reflect the views of the writers and are not necessarily a statement of the views of the SUV, the Department of Kansas, nor any other camp. Comments and articles are solicited.

Franklin Camp Website Resources

Franklin Camp Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/805798033688654>

Franklin Camp Webpage: <https://suvwks.org/franklin-camp-no-5/>

SUV National: <http://www.suvcw.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SUVCW/>

Department of Kansas Website: <https://suvwks.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Sons-of-Union-Veterans-of-the-Civil-War-Department-of-Kansas-124886647572266/>

Franklin Camp Officers

<u>COMMANDER</u>	<u>SR. VICE COMMANDER</u>	<u>JR. VICE COMMANDER</u>	<u>SECRETARY</u>	<u>TREASURER</u>
Dan Stilley	Matthew Archambault	Jeff Winters	Jim Thornton	Richard Miller

NEXT MEETING

Franklin Camp No. 5 meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month at Pegah's Restaurant, 12122 West 87th Street, Lenexa, Kansas. The camp does not meet in December.

The Franklin Camp will meet on **THURSDAY, APRIL 23**, at Pegah's Restaurant at 12122 W. 87th Street in Lenexa, Kansas, at 6 p.m. for dinner and conversation. Our featured program will be provided by Brother Dale Walters who will be speaking to us on "*The Art of Command – Decision Making by Union Generals.*"

Come early and join us for camaraderie, dinner, and education! As always, your wife or significant other is welcome. Feel free to bring guests!

Don't forget to bring a prospective recruit!

UPCOMING PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTION FOR THE FRANKLIN CAMP

April 2026 – Dale Walters – The Art of Command

May 2026 – John Hamilton – The Bloody 100th Bomb Group

June 2026 – Bill Quatman – A Young General and the Fall of Richmond

July 2026 – Matthew Archambeault – Salt and its Importance

August 2026 and September 2026 – OPEN

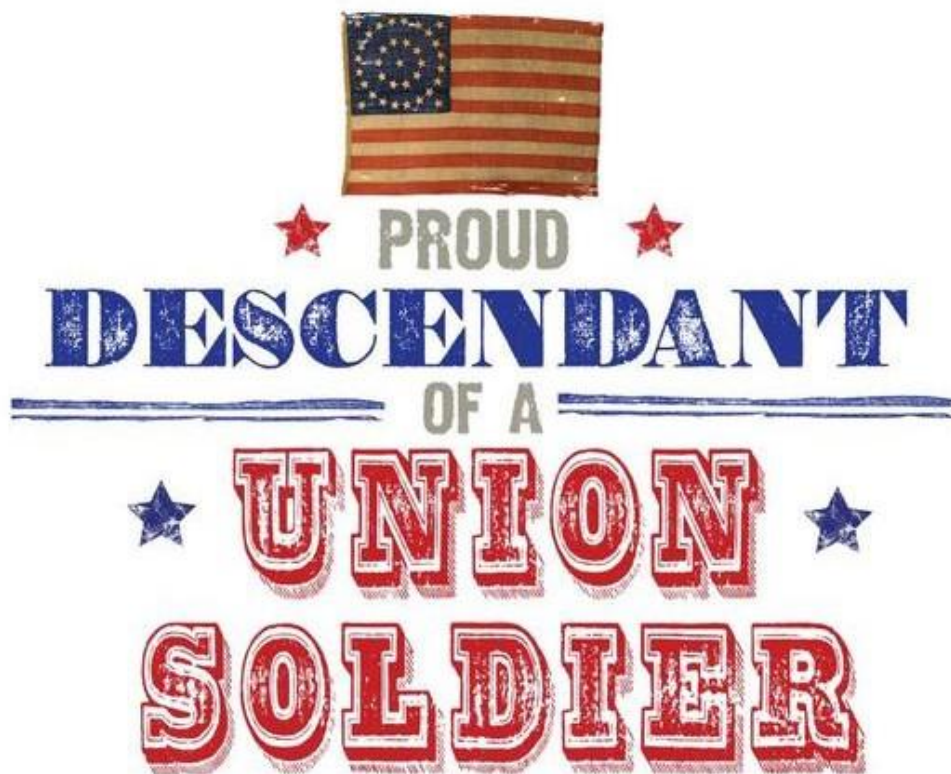
October 2026 – John Hansen – Civil War Ghost Stories

****VOLUNTEERS TO PRESENT A PROGRAM AT FUTURE MEETINGS ARE WELCOME! IF INTERESTED, PLEASE E-MAIL A MEMBER OF OUR PROGRAMS COMMITTEE****

WANTED: NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

The Franklin Camp Monthly Bulletin is always looking for articles on topics of interest. If you attend a Civil War event or have something you would like to contribute to the monthly newsletter (maybe a book recommendation and review?), please notify our newsletter editor Jim Thornton at JDThornton85@live.com. This year, in commemoration of our nation's 250th Anniversary, we would like to do a series of articles on what it means to you to be an American. What was your proudest moment as an American? Please submit your contribution in a WORD DOC or PDF format to Jim at the e-mail address above.

“THE LAST FIVE LETTERS OF THE WORD HISTORY SPELL “STORY.” AND THAT’S EXACTLY HOW HISTORY SHOULD BE TAUGHT. NUMBERS AND DATES HAVE NO SOUL. SUCH PRESENTATIONS FALL FLAT, FOR HISTORY IS ALIVE AND RELEVANT.”



REQUIRED DISCLAIMER: “Individuals attending events hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, by virtue of their attendance, agree to the usage of their likeness in the Banner, any Camp or Department Newsletter, any SUVCW website and/or on any SUVCW Social Media outlet, promotional brochures, or any other SUVCW material.”